

It's as Fundamental as Sidewalks

Redevelopment Funds are Improving Neighborhoods

Authored by: Dean Bender, Chairman of the Redevelopment Agency Citizen's Advisory Committee

In recent weeks some residents have asked, "Why doesn't our neighborhood have sidewalks?" The question is a good one and the answer sheds light on an important City agency, the Rocklin Redevelopment Agency (Agency) which is supported by a citizen's advisory committee. It is yet another example of how taxpayers in Rocklin have real input and make a difference.

Rocklin's first neighborhoods were constructed without sidewalks. Most of these neighborhoods are in downtown Rocklin near Rocklin Road and Pacific Street. Because development of these neighborhoods did not include sidewalks, street landscaping and lighting, the cost of this infrastructure was not passed on to homebuyers through the price of their homes. By contrast, in newer developments, sidewalks and other infrastructure were constructed and included in the purchase price of those homes.

The good news is that City government is committed to providing sidewalks and infrastructure improvements in downtown Rocklin. That is where the Redevelopment Agency comes in, to help secure the necessary funding to build the needed infrastructure.

We do this by designating a redevelopment area, using funds generated from the tax base in the redevelopment area and seeking funds from federal and state programs. With these funds, the Agency can then work aggressively to make a difference in a neighborhood on many levels including something as fundamental as the construction of sidewalks.

The Agency, based partially upon the recommendations of the Redevelopment Citizen's Advisory Committee, has spent millions to improve the redevelopment area in downtown Rocklin. We have already spent almost \$3 million on sidewalks. Additionally, we have allocated \$3 million in Agency funds for sidewalk, curb and gutter improvements in affected areas and will begin spending those funds this year. Although the total estimated cost for sidewalk improvements is \$5 million, we are seeking matching federal funds to make up the difference. Clearly, we are committed to the development and enrichment of our neighborhoods.

The question of whether Rocklin communities will get sidewalks is not a question of "if" but "when." The Committee originally set a goal of having sidewalks throughout the redevelopment area by 2005. Due to delays in receipt of federal funds we have been forced to push back our target date to 2007 – 2008. However, we will attempt to meet that goal by establishing priorities for construction and by taking advantage of every opportunity to get matching federal and state funds.

Specifically, we have been successful in securing additional federal funds of \$500,000 for 2004 projects alone. This careful planning and aggressive outreach to maximize Agency

dollars is particularly important since we are still \$1.5 million short of funds in order to complete our goal of sidewalks throughout the redevelopment area of the City.

In addition to funding considerations, construction priorities must also be established. In the case of sidewalks, public safety is first on the list. Specifically, the first priority for the Agency is to provide safe routes for children walking to and from school. Sidewalks are a way to make that happen. Careful planning on our part will assure that these routes to school are given priority.

The challenge of investing limited funds with the long list of needed projects continues to be a balancing act. However, the Agency and Citizen's Advisory Committee are working aggressively to focus on the priorities of residents and other City needs while leveraging what funds we do have in order to deliver infrastructure and services as efficiently as possible.

Over the years, the Agency has spent millions of dollars on improvements for not only sidewalks but also for storm drainage, road widening, traffic signals, curbs, gutters, street lighting, retaining walls, streetscape features, landscaping, park improvements, a railroad station, signage, banner program and affordable housing programs just to name a few.

The Redevelopment Agency has been actively working to improve the conditions and quality of life for Rocklin residents for more than 18 years and we will continue to do so for many years to come.

The Redevelopment Agency Citizen's Advisory Committee welcomes public comment. Please contact us at 916.625.5560 or visit our website at www.rocklin.ca.us for meeting agendas and schedules.